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Elected to Lead, Betrayed by Greed: The Hoodwinking of Constituents

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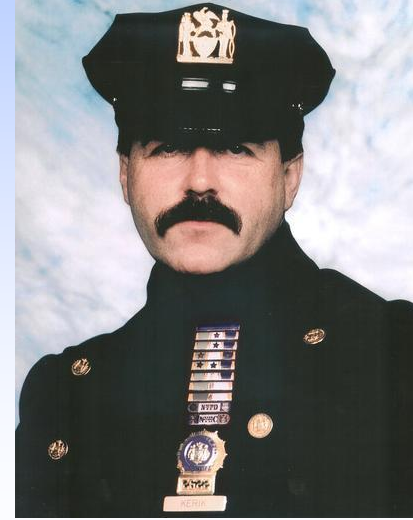
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Recommended Citation

Branner, Redd R.J.G, "Elected to Lead, Betrayed by Greed: The Hoodwinking of Constituents" (2014).
Learning Showcase 2014. 6.
<https://fuse.franklin.edu/ss2014/6>

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Elected to lead, Consumed by Greed: The hoodwinking of constituents



Former NYPD Commissioner
Bernard Kerik



Ex-Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick

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Former Arizona Rep.
Rick Renzi



Former Illinois Gov.
Rob Blagojeich

Introduction

As we make our way to the polls during election season, we take several approaches: we have our mind made up on who we want to lead; we vote for the same party in all categories; or we are not sure about the candidates, but we vote safely. Our hopes are that we have collectively selected the candidate(s) that will lead us, advancing our best interests ethically. Most candidates are everyday people, cut from the same cloth as the constituents. As they campaign for our votes, there is no doubt that their goal in attaining office is to be a leader of and for the people. Public servants do not seek office to become wealthy. However, in the past several decades, we have seen our elected officials become more celebrity than politician. Celebrity and fame are often associated with fortune. This research explores the downfall of political figures consumed by greed and the fallout effects of their corruption.

Methods

The focus of this case study is to discuss recent patterns and details of corruption in U.S. politics at the local, state and federal levels. To do so, evidence such as news articles, journal articles and court documents will be reviewed and analyzed. To gain an understanding of why key political figures continue to violate the trust of their constituents and jeopardize the economy of the areas they served, several articles will be reviewed. In particular the articles under review will focus on the following: Ethical theories; corruption; and the economics of corruption. Lastly, the research will address the following questions:

1. What ethical theories were violated by the key figures?
2. What moral theories were violated by the key figures?
3. What is the definition of corruption?
4. How do the moral and ethical theories relate to corruption?
5. What was the end result of the decade's long corruption?
6. How can future corruption be prevented?

What is Corruption?

According to Sawagvudchareaa & Yolles (2012), corruption is the misuse of entrusted power for private gain or economic gain. Political corruption is relative to the political regime that holds power. Often, politicians find themselves on the take between political, economic and social systems, all of which have power that can easily be misused. The political system has decision-making power. Whereas the economic system has financial power and the social system has coordinating power. An unfortunate consequence of political corruption is economic and environmental degradation, which affects the constituents. Corruption challenges the structural / legislative rules, institutional and role legitimacy and sacrifices accountability (Sawagvudchareaa & Yolles, 2012).

Politicians Recently Convicted of Corruption at the local, state and Federal Levels



Former Hartford, Conn. Mayor
Eddie Perez



Former Ill State Rep
Jesse Jackson, Jr



Former Rep. Duke Cunningham



Former Rep. William Jefferson, D-La.



Former Rep. Tom DeLay



Former New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin

Corruption / Punishment / Prevention

The political figures of this study have all been convicted of bribery. Economic Theory holds that the legal system should impose criminal liability on a person who advances his goals through the force or artifice rather than voluntary exchange (Stein, 2012). Bribery related offenses have a uniform structure: A public official receives something of value from a private person in exchange for acting or promising to act for the benefit of the private person or organization. Bribery involves three types of illicit transactions (Vishny, 1993):

- Proprietary: government agent grants a government contract and receives a gift in return.
- Bureaucratic: expedites the briber's acquisition of an official permit, license or document.
- Letting off: A law enforcement agent who allows a briber to break the law and go unpunished for a fee.

In recent years, much of the corrupt activities involving politicians at all levels not only involves bribery, but also political favors and misuse of campaign funds.

The punishment and/or conviction for government corruption goes all the way back to the mid-1800s. According to Ionescu (2012), corruption convictions rise under a term-limited incumbent and fall when there is divided party control. Despite the lengthy history of convictions, corruption has continued at all levels of government. According to Kwon (2012), increased monitoring for corruption and a higher probability of dismissal and conviction could reduce the expected benefits from corruption and consequently reduce the levels of corruption effort. Ades and DiTella (1997) propose three approaches to remedy corruption:

- Increase monitoring and punishment for corruption.
- Reduce discretion in bureaucrats' decisions by introducing market competition
- Provide incentives for bureaucrats not to engage in corruption

A final measure is to impose stronger penalties / punishment on those entrusted with public service when they are convicted of corruption, The light sentences, and simply being removed from office has not proven to be an effective deterrent in battling corruption.

Conclusions

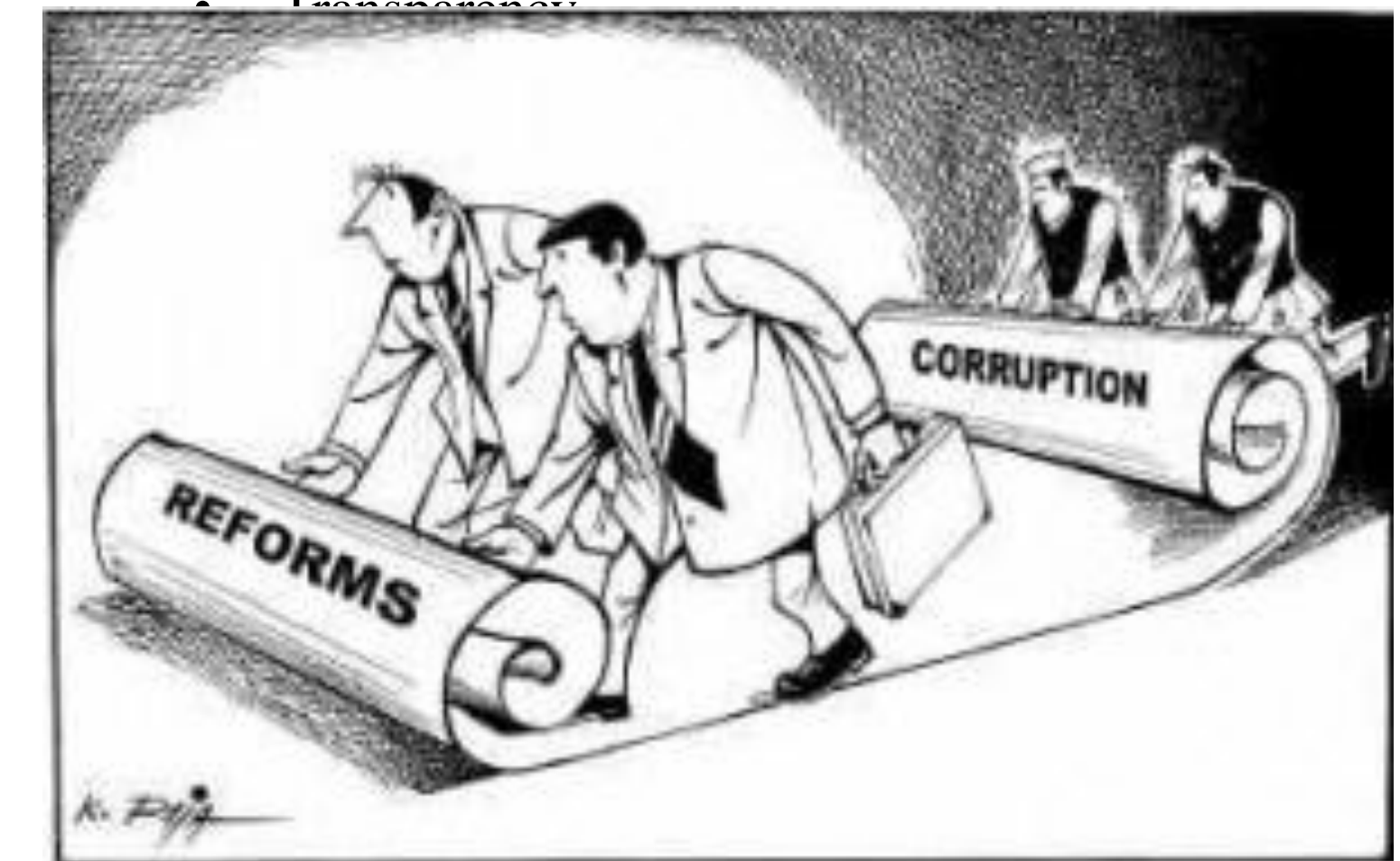
Many politicians seek office to honestly serve the constituents that elect them to office. However, when a system of political corruption exists, or repetitive opportunities to engage in corrupt activities, there is an increased likelihood that the political figure will engage in such activities. Although elected to positions of servant leadership, each of these political figures engaged in consistent patterns of transactional leadership in which they placed the emphasis on achieving self-serving results, believing that the end justified the means (Dion, 2012)

The conviction of the politicians in this study are consistent with statements from the research of Sawagvudchareaa & Yolles, it is difficult to identify the rise of corruption where poor governance exists, where institutional and role legitimacy is arbitrary and where accountability is subjective and relative to members of the political machine (2012).

In an effort to prevent future corruption, there needs to be government reform, a stronger system of monitoring and auditing political activities, as well as stronger penalties for politicians convicted of corrupt activities.

Challenges for local, state and federal ethics

- Stronger laws on bribery and other corrupt activities
- Political Reform
- Transparency



Harvard Political Review (2013)

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